AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY:
ON THE (Yellow Brick) ROAD

DRAFT due Wednesday, October 11 (This should be a typed, very readable draft)
FINAL PAPER Due Monday, October 16

Write an approximately 4-5 page autobiographical essay.

- I suggest beginning with a very rough draft brainstorming-on-paper session, not worrying at all about organization and paragraph development. This raw material may get at things which wouldn't occur to you if you get too controlled in the first phase of the writing process.

- Then, write an outline, which will help guide you through the actual paper writing.

- Paragraph Organization: Make sure sentences follow and support each other in a logical, sequential manner. Be aware of composing a topic sentence in each paragraph which will define the "work" of that paragraph. Make sure each paragraph is coherently and fully developed around the topic sentence. Use details, evidence, and examples to support your statements.

- Details, details, details: Remember to take your reader on a clear journey--GET them there by using concrete details rather than non-stop abstractions. Concepts can be stated clearly--no need to repeat the same abstract ideas over and over again using slightly different language--but remember to ground the reader in the concrete world through the effective use of detail, image and example.

- Pay attention, as always, to correct grammar usage, spelling (remember--the computer spell-check is not fail-safe), and punctuation throughout the paper. If you need to do so, review comma and semi-colon usage in your Handbook and/or on the sheet I gave you.

❖ Remember: Strong Introductory Paragraph and Strong Concluding Paragraph make Di a shiny happy person!!!
We've discussed the theme of necessarily lost innocence in The Wizard of Oz. Dorothy's journey begins with a literal Fall. In the process of her travels she grows into her own skin--becomes more active than passive, integrates aspects of the Mother, and reconfigures masculinity by unmasking the false wizard and restoring her male companions to wholeness. She returns to Kansas less innocent and more wise, having learned many crucial lessons--primarily that what she's sought has been inside her all along. She's succeeded in protecting her Animal (Toto)--the ownership of her own wildness and intuition. The adults back in Kansas may be no more adequate than they were in the film's beginning, but Dorothy's learned to provide for herself. She's come to value the love they DO offer while recognizing there's no PLACE like home--home is Dorothy herself.

Keeping our discussions in mind, accept one of the following writing challenges (and bring back the broomstick of the wicked witch!):

- Write an essay in which you describe your own fall from innocence. Describe the journey toward wisdom, what you integrated and learned along the way, whom your companions might have been, and what insights you brought back home when you returned. How might the journey have reconfigured "home" for you?

- Try an essay in which you describe a person in your life that was your own wicked witch--a person whose presence in your life created complexity, even darkness. Show how, like Dorothy, you might have fought and finally integrated this person into who you are, and what wisdom you came to in the process of the battle.

- Describe your own Kansas--your home, or emptiness in general, or adult inadequacy in particular--and your own tornado. What emotional/spiritual/intellectual forces built and swirled into a cyclone in your life? Where did the funnel carry you? How did you (did you?) return?

- We discussed ways in which Oz may be less Another Place than the underside of the Same Place--the underbelly of Kansas, as dreamed-up by Dorothy in her unconscious inner life. Write an essay which reveals to the reader the underside of your own home--your home as dreamscape--generated by your particular, and wacky, inner life.

- Write an essay in which you describe the unmasking of your Wizard--the debunking of a myth that kept you innocent, deluded, bound. How did you reveal "the man behind the curtain"? What replaced him/her/it in your life?

- Our quests, the film implies, run in two directions--out and in, toward independence and toward association, toward the future and back to the past, in homage to what made us. Write an essay that explores this notion as it has played out in your own life. Show why the tension between such apparently oppositional forces is a creative and ultimately beneficial one.